



March 2, 2015

Good evening Chairman Bye and Chairman Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Betty Cordellos. I am a Certified Tour Planner and owner of ConneCTions Tours in Darien, CT. I also serve on the Board of the Western Connecticut Convention & Visitor Bureau. I thank you for your past support of regional tourism, and appeal to you to continue funding for the regional tourism marketing agencies that are the creation of the legislature (CGS 10-397).

Historically, funding for regional tourism in Connecticut has generated revenue for the state's coffers and jobs and incomes for tens of thousands of its citizens, working in tandem with the state tourism office. That local/umbrella partnership has proven its value to the state and its individual towns and regions.

On a personal and professional level, I rely on and trust CT's regional tourism agencies to help me expand my reach, alert me to opportunities and appropriately represent my tourism business to the travel industry. My ability to stay in business and thrive could be impacted by what you decide.

Currently the budget before you includes funding for state agency tourism marketing at \$10 million, but totally eliminates funding for the three regional agencies. With huge deficits the state is facing, eliminating funding for a revenue generator like the regional tourism entities is simply bad business. I urge you to consider reinstating the proven regional agencies that have been directly responsive to the needs of your local and regional constituencies. Please find the \$1.5 million needed to sustain the three regional tourism agencies.

Sincerely,

Betty Cordellos  
Owner  
ConneCTions Tours

Support regional tourism agencies because they

- Generate significant revenue and support numerous jobs.
- Have been established by the Connecticut State Legislature to promote tourism in the state and to represent the regions, and have evolved over 30 years
- Provide every Connecticut town a direct voice in decisions regarding marketing tourism in their community and in their region.
- Provide a corps of knowledgeable volunteers dedicated to marketing regional tourism in cooperation and partnership with the Office of Tourism's overall brand campaign

- Offer a vehicle for tourism industry representatives to participate in decisions that directly affect their business and cultural heritage.
- Generate financial investment and involvement by private entities in tourism marketing activities.
- Provide input and services to the State Office of Tourism.
- Support and augment the efforts of the State Office of Tourism as partners in Connecticut tourism
- Focus regional public and private sector marketing efforts through shared objectives and strategies with the State Office of Tourism presenting an integrated campaign that showcases each of the five regional brands represented by the Central, Eastern and Western Regions that tell the story of Connecticut.
- Generate millions of dollars of free media exposure for the regions.